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Stories

Headline: The Navy's 225th anniversary message

By The Honorable Richard Danzig, Secretary of the Navy

For 225 years our Navy has always been there for America, and in fact, is older than the American republic itself.

Over these years, the most tumultuous in human history, more than 170 nations have emerged or disintegrated.

The founding fathers realized at the earliest stages of their great work that creating and preserving a new nation would require the capabilities unique to naval force, and they saw fit to place into federal service the first America sailors and ships.

Since then, we have never failed to live up to our awesome responsibilities. In fact, over this period we have increased our power, influence and relevance to the point where what was once a small force is now universally recognized as the world's

greatest Navy.

While the size and shape of our Navy has changed dramatically throughout our history, the demand for our services has not waned. Throughout this evolution, the secret to our success has been a willingness to change while adhering to our core identity and values.

This philosophy has guided us through the reliable performance of our duties during times of peace and war, and will be the key to our continued success in the years ahead.

Birthdays are a time for joy and celebration. A 225th anniversary is especially to be savored. Happy birthday Navy.

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Headline: Anthrax vaccination program moves forward

By Staff Sgt. Kathleen T. Rhem, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - DoD officials still feel strongly that the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program is necessary to protect U.S. forces, but they are examining different ways to acquire needed stocks of the vaccine.

"The department has moved toward alternative strategies for vaccine acquisition," said Charles Cragin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. "We realize that while the current vaccine is the most effective protection available against this lethal weapon, we must continually explore means to improve that protection."

He said the department is working to reduce its reliance on BioPort Corp. as the only source of the vaccine approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

"We are seeking to identify a second source for manufacturing the anthrax vaccine that can share the product license with BioPort," he said, noting that DoD has received five "expressions of interest" thus far. The department will analyze the cost, schedule and technical feasibility of each of these.

"We admit (that the current) situation, where there is a single source of the anthrax vaccine, is not the most optimal position for the department," said Anna Johnson- Winegar, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

DoD is also restricting further payments to BioPort to only those items "deemed allowable to comply with both good government fiscal practices and congressional direction," Cragin said.

BioPort has been widely criticized for its failure to earn FDA approval to manufacture anthrax vaccine after retooling its plant and vaccine manufacturing process in 1998. Cragin stressed that this poses no danger to service members, because the vaccine being administered today comes from previously approved batches manufactured by the plant's previous owner, the Michigan Department of Public Health.

It is the shortage of this previously approved vaccine that has caused DoD to scale back its vaccination schedule.

DoD experts are also working to develop a completely different vaccine that would protect against several biological warfare agents. Cragin said the fiscal 2001 budget provides for

research funds, but didn't say when such research might be expected to yield results.

FDA official Mark Elengold explained the recent controversy over the discovery of squalene, a naturally occurring substance that boosts immune response, in certain batches of the anthrax vaccine. Both DoD and the FDA had previously contended there was no squalene in the vaccine, but more recent tests detected minute amounts.

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Headline: Military retirees get dental plan with more bite

By Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Military retirees asked for a more comprehensive dental plan, and now they have one.

As a result of retiree feedback, the enhanced TRICARE Retiree Dental Program went into effect this month and adds more than 100 new procedures and extends eligibility criteria, said Navy Capt. Lawrence McKinley, TRICARE senior consultant for dentistry.

The new program supersedes one started in February 1998 that augmented "space-available" retiree dental care at military hospitals and clinics.

"The basic TRDP didn't cover all the dental needs of the retired community," McKinley said. After listening to retirees and cataloging their needs and requests over the past 18 months, he said, Delta Dental Plan of California, the insurance administrator; the TRICARE Management Activity; and the dental service chiefs worked together to determine the best program possible while keeping the premium costs affordable.

Eligible beneficiaries include: military retirees, including those over age 65; reserve members entitled to retired pay, but under age 60; Spouses of retirees; children under age 21, or full-time students under age 23; a nonremarried surviving spouse or eligible child of a deceased member or member who died while on active duty for more than 30 days and who aren't eligible for the TRICARE Dental Program.

The enhanced dental program also offers expanded eligibility, McKinley said. Now, members can enroll a spouse or child without enrolling themselves provided they have documented proof that they are: eligible to receive dental care from the Department of Veterans Affairs; enrolled in an employers' dental plan that isn't available to family members; Unable to obtain benefits from the TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan due to a current and enduring medical or dental condition.

McKinley, a Navy Dental Corps officer since 1971, said the 114 new procedures make the enhanced TRICARE plan "a very comprehensive dental program now." New services include crowns and bridges, full and partial dentures, orthodontics, and allowance for composite-resin - white fillings in the back teeth, a second annual cleaning, and dental accident coverage for traumatic injury.

The only things not covered in the new program are certain extremely expensive procedures such as dental implants, he added.

The new services come at a price. Beneficiaries will pay about double for the enhanced coverage under the new dental plan, McKinley said. Monthly premiums, dependent upon geographic region, range from \$21 to \$34 for one person; \$40 to \$65 for two; and \$62 to \$105 for a family of three or more.

The rates are good until Jan. 31, 2003, when new contract bids are scheduled. However, additional DoD-directed enhancements could increase those premiums.

"We asked beneficiaries through surveys whether they would be willing to pay more for an enhanced program, and 62 percent said yes," McKinley said. "In fact, over 20 percent said they would be willing to pay more than double the old premium for an enhanced program.

So far, 45,000 people have signed up for the enhanced program, McKinley said. Those enrolled agree to stay with the program for at least 24 months. New enrollees who change their minds can quit within the first 30 days provided they haven't used any program benefits.

To determine eligibility for the enhanced TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, or monthly premium rates per region, call Enrollment Services toll-free at 1 (888) 838-8737. Visit the TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan Web site at www.ddpdelta.org for more information.

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Nutrition goes shopping at the commissary
By Rod Duren, Naval Hospital Pensacola

PENSACOLA, Fla. - If you go grocery shopping on an empty stomach, the contents of your checking account are the only thing that's guaranteed to get thinner.

So, would you like to know how to select healthier foods, or maybe even spend less money on groceries? What about some tips on buying and eating tasty and nutritious foods?

The Naval Hospital Pensacola Medical Nutrition Therapy Department and the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) have entered into an agreement allowing the medical facility to set up inside the food store to provide nutrition information to customers.

Joan Drawdy, Naval Hospital Registered Dietician, provides information to customers suggesting best food purchases, moderation and how to improve choices.

Dowdy is at the commissary three days a week, at varying times in order to reach different populations.

"Joan is very popular with our shoppers, and adds a valuable facet to many customers' visits to the store," said Bill Cochrane, Acting Commissary Store Director

Drawdy has been helping commissary shoppers consider reducing their fat intake by providing brand-neutral information on various products, and suggesting changes to their eating habits.

"It's been working pretty well," said Drawdy "There's been a few people who put back some of the high-fat dairy foods after we've had a few moments in discussion about it," she said.

But Drawdy insists she'll discuss any nutrition topic with customers from fiber and soy products to functional foods.

"One gentleman came by the commissary booth recently to tell me he'd decided to do something about his weight and eating lifestyle. He'd lost 25 pounds in a rather short period of time and planned to continue his healthy lifestyle," said Drawdy.

As the program develops, she will continue to look for ways to increase patient nutrition services and information to all Department of Defense eligible customers in the region.

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Headline: Anthrax question and answer

Question: Should men who get vaccinated delay fathering a child?

Answer: No. There is no reason for a man to delay fathering a child after vaccination.

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Headline: TRICARE question and answer

Question: Does the copayment increase for the emergency room?

Answer: For eligible beneficiaries, there are no out-of-pocket costs for any care received at a military hospital, including emergency room care. The out-of-pocket costs for care received at a civilian emergency room for families of E-4 and below enrolled in Prime is \$10. For families of E-5 and above and retirees and their families, the copay for an emergency room visit is \$30. This single payment, \$10 or \$30, includes all emergency room services provided in conjunction with the visit. For those who have chosen to remain in TRICARE Standard, or use the TRICARE Extra program, their regular deductibles and copayments apply.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Good posture boosts energy

From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

WASHINGTON - You may think it's more comfortable and restful to slouch while using your keyboard or to lean on your desk with your elbows while reading. But in the long run, it isn't.

In fact, poor posture, the stress of leaning over paperwork and straining to peer at computer screens may eventually cause muscle tension, stiffness, backaches, neck cramps, and fatigue. Such habits can even lead to more serious problems, such as spine disorders or pinched nerves.

Slouching can overstretch the ligaments that support your spine. Cradling a telephone receiver between your head and shoulder can give you a stiff, sore neck. Sitting in one position for long periods can reduce circulation in your muscles, increasing fatigue and stiffness and setting you up for injury.

Here are the major components of healthy-and energizing-posture: Whether sitting or standing, keep your ears, shoulders and hips stacked in a straight line to keep the natural curves of your spine in its normal, balanced alignment. Adjust your chair height so that your feet are flat on the floor or on a

footstool. Avoid crossing your legs.

Slide your chair under your desk so you won't have to lean too far forward. If your chair is at a comfortable height, your knees will be level with or slightly lower than your hips. Support your lower back with the back of your chair.

For additional support use a cushion, lumbar roll or rolled up towel and place it in the small of your back. Place books and papers in a book stand or document holder the same distance from you as your computer screen. Make sure such documents and the computer screen are at or slightly below eye level.

Do not cradle the telephone receiver between your head and shoulder, use a headset or speakerphone or simply hold it to your ear with your hand. Stretch about once an hour. Avoid staying in one position for hours at a time. Stand up, breathe deeply, stretch and shake out the kinks.

Just a few minutes an hour should stimulate circulation and keep you limber. You may accomplish a lot at work despite bad posture, but you'll get a surprising energy boost and be able to accomplish even more when you practice good posture. Good posture contributes to deep breathing, healthy organ function and good circulation-all great energy boosters. It may take a little practice, but the return in comfort and energy will go a long way toward helping you look and feel your best.

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Comments and ideas for MEDNEWS are welcome. Story Submissions are highly encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, At email: mednews@us.med.navy.mil; telephone 202-762-3218, (dsn) 762, or fax 202-762-3224.

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